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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/751,820	01/05/2004	Douglas S. McNair	CRNC.103792	3634

46169 7590 04/03/2008
SHOOK, HARDY & BACON L.L.P.
Intellectual Property Department
2555 GRAND BOULEVARD
KANSAS CITY, MO 64108-2613

EXAMINER

NGUYEN, TRAN N

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3626

MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
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04/03/2008

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/751,820	Applicant(s) MCNAIR, DOUGLAS S.	
	Examiner Tran Nguyen	Art Unit 3626	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 09 January 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Notice to Applicant

This communication is in response to the communication filed 01/09/2008.

Pending claim(s): 1. Amended claim(s): 1.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 01/09/2008 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

As per the rejection of claim 1 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph imposed in the previous Office Action, this rejection is hereby withdrawn in view of Applicant's amendment to claim 1.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the

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invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

Claim(s) 1 is/are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant-cited art number 11 of the IDS submitted 07/10/2007 (Weinert) in view of Ashton (Geographic Variations in Utilization Rates in Veterans Affairs Hospital and Clinics, copy provided to Applicant in the Office Action mailed 01/07/2007) and Chan (Access to physicians in underserved communities in Canada: something old, something new).

As per claim 1, Weinert discloses a method capable of:

- (a) being computerized (page 458 column 2 paragraph 1);
- (b) providing a predictor variable or dependent variable in investigations of the relationship between rurality and health-care variables (page 463 column 2 paragraph 6) for a locality comprising a plurality of health care institutions (page 454 column 2 paragraph 3);

the method comprising:

(a) obtaining data pertaining to the distance to care and the population for county residences (It is noted that data on county residences are considered to be “a catchment area”) (page 455 column 2 paragraph 2);

(b) normalizing amounts and counts as measures of distance (It is noted that amounts and counts are considered to be “proband counts”) (page 456 column 2 paragraph 7);

(c) transforming the distance values using a Box-Cox power transformation (page 456 column 2 paragraph 8), wherein the distance value represents the distance to care (page 455 column 2 paragraph 2);

(d) transforming the population values using a Box-Cox power transformation (page 456 column 2 paragraph 9), wherein the population is measured in persons (page 459 Table 1);

(e) standardizing the distance and population values using standard deviation and signs, thereby transforming the distance and population values (page 457 column 1 paragraph 3);

(f) weighting the standardized transformed values (page 457 column 1 paragraph 4) and summing standardized values to form an initial index (It is noted that the initial index is considered to be “a provisional index”) (page 457 column 2 paragraph 1);

(g) standardizing the initial index to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one (page 457 column 2 paragraph 2);

(h) seeking the optimal choices for λ_1 and λ_2 such that the Anderson-Darling measure of deviation from normality minimized (page 458 column 1 paragraph 3-4);

(i) applying the optimal values of λ_1 and λ_2 to produce the rurality index (page 458 column 1 paragraph 1;

(j) analyzing the distribution to determine a grouping for the rurality index, and using tables of standard normal distribution to find percentiles and probabilities for the rurality index (page 458 column 2 paragraph 3);

(k) risk-adjusting access to care and health care utilization using the rurality index and distance categories (page 458 column 2 paragraph 2) to represent the differences in access to care due to distance (page 455 column 2 paragraph 3);

(l) displaying the results (It is inherent that a computer program computing optimal transformation values displays the results either as visual indicia to the user or as data parameters to another program) (page 458 column 2 paragraph 1).

Weinert does not disclose risk-adjusting using age.

Ashton discloses risk-adjusting based on age (page 34 column 1 paragraph 4).

At the time the invention was made, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include the features of Ashton within the invention as disclosed by Weinert with the motivation of controlling for variations attributable to patient factors outside the control of the medical care system (Ashton; page 34 column 1 paragraph 4).

Weinert further teaches that the rurality index is capable of being used as a predictor variable or as a dependent variable in investigations of the relationships between rurality and health-care variables (page 463 column 2 paragraph 6).

Weinert and Ashton do not teach “the clinical indicators are used to assess quality of health services in the locale, the quality assessment including... identifying under-resourced local health care needs”.

Chan teaches measuring areas that are “underserved” with respect to health care (page 329 paragraph 1), wherein a measure of rurality is used (page 332 Table 2).

All component parts are known. The only difference is the combination of “old elements” into a single embodiment.

At the time the invention was made, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include the teachings of Chan within the embodiment of Weinert and Ashton, since the operation of the quality of care measurement is in no way dependent on the rurality indicator, and a standard quality of care measurement may be used with a rurality indicator to achieve the predictable result of measuring quality of care for rural areas (Chan; page 333 paragraph 2, Weinert; page 455 column 2 paragraph 3).

Insofar as the remainder of the claim is concerned, the applied art need not teach these limitations in view of “or” and “at least one of”.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claim 1 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure:

Cairnes (6139494) teaches providing telemedicine to rural patients who encounter difficulty in obtaining health care (column 3 line 58-59).

Felthauser (5420786) teaches determining the distance between a plurality of sales outlets.

Javitt (5918208) teaches customizing health care provider data based on locality and surround rural counties (column 8 line 1-4).

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from Examiner should be directed to Tran N. Nguyen (Ken) whose telephone number is (571) 270-1310. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Eastern Time.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, Examiner's Supervisor, Joseph Thomas can be reached on (571) 272-6776.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/T. N./

Examiner, Art Unit 3626

02/25/2008

/C. Luke Gilligan/

Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3626